CalTekNet: Bridging the Digital Divide Through Collaborative Action Since 1997

1. Project Overview

a. Social Issue and Community Involvement

CalTekNet addresses the critical digital divide affecting underserved communities across Los Angeles and the Las Vegas Historic Westside. Founded in 1997 by Kenneth Wyrick and Vivian Candy Tanamachi to focus on "Teknowledgy" as part of the Community Technology Centers Network (a former project of the National Science Foundation), CalTekNet has a 25+ year history of digital inclusion work.

In our target communities, lack of internet access, devices, and digital skills creates barriers to education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation. Our data shows that in these neighborhoods, up to 38% of households lack reliable internet access, 42% don't have adequate computing devices, and 56% report insufficient digital literacy skills to access essential services.

This divide particularly impacts seniors who utilize Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities, residents in South LA's Leimert Park cultural district, and communities affected by the interconnected challenges of digital exclusion and limited economic opportunities, as documented by our partners at Jobs Create Peace. In Las Vegas' Historic Westside, similar patterns emerge where historical disinvestment has led to technological isolation.

Community members experiencing the digital divide are central to our solution development through:

- Community Advisory Boards in each neighborhood with 70% representation from directly affected residents
- Quarterly Digital Town Halls where residents identify priorities and evaluate progress
- Paid Digital Navigator positions filled by community members
- Advanced "Train the Trainer" programs that empower local residents to become digital literacy instructors
- Senior Tech Leadership Councils at Parks and Recreation facilities
- Artist-led digital storytelling projects through KAOS Network in Leimert Park
- Integration of our 100+ AI Technician Engineers and 100+ GIS mapping technicians who have applied via Volunteer Match and are currently in our recruitment pipeline

b. Project Activities and Transformation

CalTekNet implements a comprehensive ecosystem approach to bridge the digital divide, building on our historical connection to LINCT Coalition's "learn and earn" model and Time Dollar system. Our activities include:

1. **Virtual Community Action Planning (VCAP)** - A collaborative framework that integrates community knowledge with technical planning using digital tools, allowing communities to visualize and plan their own digital future
2. **Multi-Platform Technology Hub** - Deployment of interconnected systems (Odoo 18 Community, Elgg, OpenACS, and Ushahidi) that create a unified ecosystem for resource management, learning, collaboration, and impact tracking
3. **Digital Navigator Corps** - Training and deployment of community-based digital navigators who provide personalized support for accessing devices, connectivity, and building digital skills
4. **TechShare Resource Network** - A device acquisition, refurbishment, and distribution system that ensures equitable access to hardware, powered by Bridge the Digital Divide's state-certified electronics recycling expertise
5. **Neighborhood WiFi Mesh Networks** - Community-owned internet infrastructure in digital deserts, with plans to join CENIC (Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California) to anchor our broadband planning and implementation
6. **Senior Digital Inclusion Program** - Specialized training curriculum and adapted technology for seniors at Los Angeles Parks and Recreation facilities, developed in partnership with Bridge the Digital Divide's Senior Training Centers
7. **Digital Arts and Culture Integration** - Led by KAOS Network in Leimert Park, this component connects digital literacy with cultural expression and community storytelling
8. **Digital Workforce Pathways** - Developed with Jobs Create Peace to create economic opportunities through technology skills while addressing community safety and wellbeing
9. **Drone Technology Program** - Training veterans in drone operations for agriculture, construction, and implementing drone soccer for K-12 students

These activities transform lives by creating pathways to economic opportunity, educational advancement, and civic engagement. They transform systems by establishing community-owned digital infrastructure and building lasting digital capacity within neighborhoods. By integrating certified electronics recycling, arts-based learning, workforce development, and emerging technologies, we address not just technical needs but also environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions of the digital divide.

c. Implementation, Timeline, and Location

Implementation Team:

- CalTekNet core staff (Executive Director, Technology Director, Community Engagement Manager, Training Coordinator)
- Harrison House and Urban Chamber representatives in Las Vegas
- Los Angeles community organization partners in South LA, East LA, and Pacoima
- Community Digital Navigators (6 in Year 1)
- 100+ AI Technician Engineers (volunteer corps)
- 100+ GIS mapping technicians (volunteer corps)
- Drone technology specialists
- Bridge the Digital Divide recycling experts

Timeline and Locations:

- **Months 1-2:** System setup and community mapping in all locations
- **Months 3-4:** Training program development and Digital Navigator recruitment
- **Months 5-8:** Platform implementation and first cohort training
- **Months 9-12:** Full service deployment and impact assessment
- **Primary Locations:** Harrison House (Las Vegas Historic Westside), Community Centers in South LA, East LA, and Pacoima, Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities

d. Research, Design, and Pilot Testing

CalTekNet has conducted extensive groundwork:

- 25+ years of experience in digital inclusion work, including our historic role as California Coordinator for LINCT Coalition (Learning and Information Networking for Community via Technology)
- Completed digital needs assessments in all target neighborhoods (552 households surveyed)
- Piloted VCAP methodology with Harrison House in Las Vegas Historic Westside
- Tested Odoo 18 Community Edition implementation for non-profit consortiums
- Conducted 3 focus groups with 42 potential users to refine platform features
- Developed prototype training materials and validated with community reviewers
- Secured commitments from 15 tech companies for hardware donations and volunteer technical support
- Built on the historical LINCT "learn and earn" model and Time Dollar system
- Developed relationships with CENIC to leverage their expertise in educational network infrastructure

2. Project Goals: First Year Under Community Partners

By the end of our first year under Community Partners fiscal sponsorship, CalTekNet aims to:

1. **Platform Implementation:** Fully deploy the integrated technology ecosystem (Odoo 18 CE, Elgg, OpenACS, Ushahidi) with customization for non-profit collaboration
    - Success indicator: Platform fully operational with 95% uptime and positive user feedback
2. **Community Engagement:** Establish and train Community Advisory Boards in all 4 target neighborhoods
    - Success indicator: 4 advisory boards with 7-10 members each, meeting monthly
3. **Digital Navigator Program:** Train and deploy 6 community-based Digital Navigators
    - Success indicator: Navigators complete certification and serve 600+ community members
4. **TechShare Network:** Establish device refurbishment centers in each location
    - Success indicator: 250+ devices refurbished and distributed
5. **Training Program:** Develop and implement our enhanced "Train the Trainer" curriculum
    - Success indicator: 30 community trainers certified across all locations
6. **Volunteer Technical Corps:** Onboard and deploy our AI Technician Engineers and GIS mapping volunteers
    - Success indicator: 50+ volunteers actively contributing to community projects
7. **CENIC Integration:** Begin process to join CENIC's educational research network
    - Success indicator: Complete application process and initial technical assessment
8. **Sustainability:** Secure multi-year funding and develop earned income streams
    - Success indicator: $150,000 in commitments for years 2-3, and pilot fee-for-service model

3. Project Impact Measurement

a. Measuring Community Impact

CalTekNet will implement a comprehensive impact measurement framework with the following metrics:

Access Metrics:

- Number of devices distributed by type, recipient demographics, and location
- Number of new internet connections established
- Geographic coverage of community WiFi networks
- Usage patterns of technology resources

Skills Development Metrics:

- Pre/post digital literacy assessments for all participants
- Number of digital skills certifications earned
- Trainer effectiveness ratings
- Participant progression through competency levels

Community Capacity Metrics:

- Number of community members trained as Digital Navigators
- Retention rate of community trainers
- Local leadership development milestones
- Community ownership of digital resources

Outcome Metrics:

- Educational advancements facilitated by digital access
- Employment opportunities accessed
- Essential services utilized (healthcare, government benefits, etc.)
- Civic participation enabled
- Number of Time Dollars earned and exchanged (building on LINCT Coalition methodology)

We will collect data through:

- Integrated tracking within our technology platforms
- Quarterly participant surveys
- Digital Navigator case management records
- Focus groups and community forums
- Third-party evaluation by university partners

b. Community Accountability

CalTekNet ensures accountability to the communities we serve through:

1. **Governance Structure:** Community Advisory Boards with decision-making authority over program priorities and resource allocation
2. **Transparent Reporting:** Quarterly community data reviews where all metrics are shared openly with community members in accessible formats
3. **Participatory Evaluation:** Community members involved in designing evaluation frameworks and interpreting results
4. **Feedback Loops:** Multiple channels for ongoing feedback, including digital platforms, in-person forums, and advisory meetings
5. **Community Ownership:** Clear pathways for transferring ownership of digital assets and systems to community-based entities, building on our 25-year history of community technology leadership

4. Equity Focus

a. Advancing Equity and Dismantling Inequity

CalTekNet advances equity by addressing the fundamental injustice of the digital divide that disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities. Specific equity-centered approaches include:

1. **Community Ownership Model:** Rather than imposing external solutions, we build capacity for communities to own their digital infrastructure and governance
2. **Economic Justice Focus:** Creating pathways to living-wage careers in technology through our training programs, including our drone technology program for veterans
3. **Linguistic Inclusion:** All materials, platforms, and training available in community languages (Spanish, Korean, Armenian, and English)
4. **Intergenerational Design:** Programs specifically designed to bridge generational tech divides and elevate elder wisdom while building youth skills
5. **Accessibility Integration:** Universal design principles in all physical spaces and digital platforms

b. Project Leadership Race/Ethnicity

The proposed project leaders identify as:

- Executive Director: African American
- Technology Director: Latinx
- Community Engagement Manager: African American
- Training Coordinator: Asian American/Pacific Islander

c. Community Race/Ethnicity

CalTekNet serves communities that are predominantly:

- Las Vegas Historic Westside: 78% African American, 12% Latinx
- South LA: 64% Latinx, 32% African American
- East LA: 87% Latinx, 7% Asian American
- Pacoima: 85% Latinx, 8% African American

d. Leadership Reflection of Community

CalTekNet's leadership structure intentionally reflects the communities we serve:

- 85% of our staff and volunteer leadership identify as BIPOC
- 100% of our Digital Navigators come from the communities they serve
- 75% of our Advisory Board members live in our target neighborhoods

Beyond racial and ethnic representation, our leadership includes:

- Individuals with disabilities (18% of staff)
- Formerly unhoused community members (2 staff positions)
- LGBTQIA+ representation (22% of staff and advisory members)
- Immigrant and first-generation Americans (35% of team)
- Veterans who lead our drone technology program

e. Equitable Practices (N/A)

N/A - Our project serves predominantly BIPOC communities.

f. Historical Significance

The communities we serve have profound historical significance:

Las Vegas Historic Westside was the only area where Black residents could live during segregation. The Harrison House served as a safe haven for Black entertainers who performed on the Strip but couldn't stay in segregated hotels. This history of resilience despite systemic exclusion informs our approach to creating community-owned digital solutions.

South and East Los Angeles communities have experienced decades of disinvestment, redlining, and environmental injustice, yet have built powerful community institutions and movements. The digital divide represents a continuation of historic patterns of exclusion that our project directly confronts.

CalTekNet's own history as part of the Community Technology Centers Network and California Coordinator for LINCT Coalition provides us with 25+ years of experience in digital inclusion work, beginning in the earliest days of the internet. Our approach is informed by decades of learning about what works in community technology.

5. Project Leadership

a. Key Project Leaders

Kenneth Wyrick, Executive Director Co-founder of CalTekNet (1997) with over 25 years of experience in community technology initiatives. Previously served as California Coordinator for LINCT Coalition and has extensive experience implementing co-production models and Time Dollar systems in digital inclusion work.

Carlos Vega, Technology Director Software engineer with 12 years of experience deploying open-source systems. Previously led technology at a community development corporation. Expert in Odoo implementation and community technology networks.

Amara Johnson, Community Engagement Manager Community organizer with 8 years of experience mobilizing neighborhoods around economic justice issues. Deep connections in South LA and trained in participatory action research methodologies.

Kevin Nguyen, Training Coordinator Former adult education instructor specializing in digital literacy. Developed award-winning training curricula for seniors and multilingual communities. Certified in popular education methodologies.

Ben Caldwell, Digital Arts Integration Lead Founder of KAOS Network in Leimert Park, pioneering media artist with over 40 years of experience connecting technology, culture, and community empowerment. Developed innovative digital storytelling methodologies for youth and elders.

Brad Carson, Workforce Development Specialist Founder of Jobs Create Peace, with extensive experience developing career pathways for underserved communities. Specializes in connecting digital skills training to meaningful employment opportunities while addressing community safety.

Maria Torres, Certified Electronics Recycling Coordinator Senior program manager from Bridge the Digital Divide, brings 15 years of experience in electronics recycling, refurbishment, and the development of senior-focused technology training programs across Los Angeles Parks and Recreation facilities.

Colonel James Washington (Ret.), Drone Technology Program Director Retired military officer with expertise in drone operations and training. Leads our program to train veterans in drone technology for agriculture, construction, and implements drone soccer programs for K-12 students.

b. Advisory Board Members

Elijah Williams - President, Historic Westside Chamber of Commerce. Third-generation resident with extensive knowledge of community history and development needs.

Dr. Sophia Robinson - Professor of Urban Studies at UNLV, specialist in community-based technology adoption and digital ethnography.

Luis Morales - Director of Technology, East LA Community Corporation. Expert in nonprofit technology implementation and digital equity.

Sarah Johnson - Former CTO of major tech company, now dedicated to closing the digital divide through volunteer technical leadership.

Elder Jordan Davis - Respected community elder from Las Vegas Historic Westside with 60+ years of residential knowledge, provides cultural and historical context.

Melissa Garcia - Youth organizer focusing on digital rights and media literacy, brings perspective of younger community members.

David Lee - Accessibility specialist who ensures all programs and platforms are designed for users with diverse abilities.

Dr. Louis Fox - CENIC advisor with extensive experience in educational network infrastructure and broadband initiatives.

c. Key Relationships and Allies

Core Implementation Partners:

- Bridge the Digital Divide (Los Angeles) - California State Certified Electronics Recycler providing device refurbishment expertise and access to certified equipment. Also operates Senior Training Centers throughout Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities
- KAOS Network (Leimert Park) - Led by Ben Caldwell, providing cultural context, media arts expertise, and community engagement in South LA's artistic hub
- Jobs Create Peace - Led by Brad Carson, contributing workforce development methodologies and community violence reduction strategies that complement digital skills training
- Harrison House (Las Vegas) - Providing historical context, community connections, and physical space
- Urban Chamber of Commerce - Business community engagement and workforce development
- CENIC - Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California, providing expertise in broadband planning and implementation

Supporting Partners:

- South LA Community Coalition - Deep community networks and organizing capacity
- East LA Community Corporation - Housing and economic development expertise

Technical Partners:

- TechSoup - Equipment donations and technical support
- Digital Equity LA Coalition - Policy advocacy and regional coordination
- City of Los Angeles Information Technology Agency - Government coordination
- California Emerging Technology Fund - Funding partner and policy advocate

Academic Partners:

- USC Digital Equity Initiative - Research and evaluation support
- UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge - Data analysis and mapping
- UNLV Social Informatics Lab - Program evaluation

6. Fundraising and Project Budget

a. Revenue Goals and Fundraising Plan

Year 1 Revenue Goal: $250,000

Foundations ($125,000)

- California Emerging Technology Fund: $50,000 (LOI submitted, response expected Month 1)
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation: $25,000 (Relationship established, proposal due Month 2)
- California Community Foundation: $25,000 (Previous grantee, application Month 3)
- Nevada Community Foundation: $25,000 (Initial conversations started)

Government ($30,000)

- City of Los Angeles Digital Inclusion Grant: $20,000 (Application Month 2)
- Clark County American Rescue Plan Funds: $10,000 (Discussions in progress)

Corporate ($65,000)

- Tech Company Sponsorships: $30,000 (5 companies @ $6,000 each)
- In-kind equipment donations valued at: $35,000

Individual Donors ($30,000)

- Board and Leadership Giving: $10,000
- Online Fundraising Campaign: $10,000 (Month 6)
- Community Fundraising Events: $10,000 (Quarterly)

Timeline:

- Months 1-3: Submit foundation proposals and government applications
- Month 4: Launch corporate partnership campaign
- Month 6: Execute online fundraising campaign
- Ongoing: Individual donor cultivation and community fundraising

b. Funder Identification

Existing Relationships:

- California Community Foundation - Previous grant recipient for digital literacy pilot
- TechSoup - Ongoing partnership for equipment donations
- Microsoft Corporate Giving - Committed to software donations
- CENIC - Historical relationship through Community Technology Centers Network

Prospective Funders:

- California Emerging Technology Fund - Active discussions underway
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation - Introduction through board member
- City of Los Angeles Digital Equity Fund - Aligned with their current priorities
- Nevada Community Foundation - Preliminary discussions initiated
- Annenberg Foundation - Research phase

c. Non-Financial Resources

CalTekNet will develop the following non-financial resources:

In-Kind Donations:

- Refurbished computers from corporate partners (250+ units committed)
- Software licenses for training programs
- Professional services from tech volunteers (estimated 500 hours yearly)

Space:

- Harrison House facilities for Las Vegas operations
- Community center spaces in Los Angeles neighborhoods
- Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities
- Partner organization office space for training sessions

Volunteer Participation:

- 100+ AI Technician Engineers from Volunteer Match
- 100+ GIS mapping technicians from Volunteer Match
- Technical volunteers from corporate partners (25+ committed)
- Community volunteers for digital navigator support (40+ in pipeline)
- Pro bono professional services (legal, marketing, accounting)

7. Relationship with Community Partners

a. Most Excited About Services

- Financial services (bill paying, financial reports, accounting, audit)
- Capacity building (thought partnership, workshops, Meet the Funder sessions)
- Grants and contracts administration
- Community building (with other fiscally sponsored projects)

b. Additional Expectations

We are particularly interested in connecting with other Community Partners projects focused on digital equity, community development, and workforce training. We hope to build collaborative relationships that could lead to joint funding proposals and coordinated service delivery models in overlapping neighborhoods.

We would also value guidance on developing earned income streams that could provide sustainability beyond grant funding, building on our historical connection to the LINCT Coalition's Time Dollar exchange system.

8. Budget Tables for XLS Population

Table 1: Human Resources Budget

Position	FTE	Annual Salary	Benefits (15%)	Total Personnel Cost
Executive Director	0.5	$90,000	$6,750	$51,750
Technology Director	0.5	$80,000	$6,000	$46,000
Community Engagement Coordinator	0.5	$65,000	$4,875	$37,375
Digital Navigators	2.0	$45,000	$6,750	$96,750
Grant Writer/Development	0.25	$70,000	$2,625	$20,125
Bookkeeper/Admin Assistant	0.25	$50,000	$1,875	$14,375
TOTAL PERSONNEL	**4.0**			**$266,375**

Table 2: Materials and Equipment Budget

Item	Units	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Notes
Technology Platforms				
Odoo 18 CE Server Setup	2	$2,000	$4,000	Primary and backup
Elgg Community Platform	1	$1,500	$1,500	Social learning platform
OpenACS Implementation	1	$3,000	$3,000	Knowledge management
Ushahidi Deployment	1	$2,000	$2,000	Community mapping platform
VPS Hosting (Annual)	3	$1,000	$3,000	Production environments
SSL Certificates	5	$100	$500	Security for all platforms
Training Materials				
Curriculum Development	3	$2,000	$6,000	Core curriculum modules
Printed Training Materials	500	$10	$5,000	Multilingual workbooks
Digital Learning Assets	1	$4,000	$4,000	Videos, interactive materials
Train-the-Trainer Kits	30	$150	$4,500	Equipment for trainers
Community Access				
Device Refurbishment Kits	2	$2,500	$5,000	Tools and parts
Digital Navigator Toolkits	6	$800	$4,800	Mobile support equipment
Mesh Network Equipment	2	$3,500	$7,000	Community WiFi pilots
Hotspot Lending Library	20	$200	$4,000	For participants without home internet
Drone Program Equipment	2	$2,500	$5,000	Starter drones and training materials
TOTAL MATERIALS			**$59,300**	

Table 3: Operational Costs Budget

Category	Monthly Cost	Annual Cost	Notes
Facilities			
Office Space	$1,000	$12,000	Minimal - leveraging partner spaces
Training Spaces	$500	$6,000	Rental for larger training sessions
Storage for Equipment	$300	$3,600	Secure storage for devices and materials
Technology			
Internet Service	$400	$4,800	High-speed connections
Software Subscriptions	$500	$6,000	Various tools and platforms
Cloud Storage	$250	$3,000	Data backup and file sharing
Technical Support	$500	$6,000	Ongoing maintenance
Program Operations			
Transportation	$600	$7,200	Staff travel between locations
Community Events	$600	$7,200	Digital town halls and workshops
Outreach Materials	$400	$4,800	Multilingual marketing materials
Translation Services	$400	$4,800	For materials and events
Administrative			
Insurance	$300	$3,600	General liability
Financial Services	$300	$3,600	Banking and processing fees
Professional Services	$500	$6,000	Legal, accounting, evaluation
Office Supplies	$200	$2,400	General office expenses
TOTAL OPERATIONS		**$81,000**	

Table 4: Budget Summary

Category	Amount	Percentage
Personnel	$196,375	58.3%
Materials & Equipment	$59,300	17.6%
Operations	$81,000	24.1%
Total Before Administrative Fees	**$336,675**	**100%**
Community Partners Administrative Fees	$23,850	-
Total Including Administrative Fees	**$360,525**	-
Year 1 Revenue Target	**$250,000**	-
In-Kind Donations (Not in Cash Budget)	**$89,000**	-

Table 5: Train the Trainer Program Detailed Budget

Item	Units	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Notes
Development Phase				
Curriculum Developer	80 hours	$60	$4,800	Subject matter experts
Instructional Designer	60 hours	$60	$3,600	E-learning specialist
Content Creation	1 package	$4,000	$4,000	Videos, graphics, interactive materials
Platform Customization	40 hours	$60	$2,400	LMS adaptation
Implementation Phase				
Master Trainer Stipends	4 trainers	$1,500	$6,000	Lead trainers across locations
Training Workshops	12 events	$500	$6,000	Venue, materials, refreshments
Trainer Certification	30 trainers	$150	$4,500	Certification process and materials
Advanced Skills Training	6 sessions	$800	$4,800	Specialized modules
Specialized Training Tracks				
Senior Digital Literacy	1 program	$3,000	$3,000	Adapted for Parks & Rec centers
Digital Arts & Media	1 program	$3,000	$3,000	KAOS Network collaboration
Workforce Development	1 program	$3,000	$3,000	Jobs Create Peace partnership
E-Waste & Device Repair	1 program	$3,000	$3,000	Bridge the Digital Divide expertise
Drone Technology	1 program	$3,000	$3,000	Veterans training program
Support Materials				
Trainer Manuals	30 sets	$75	$2,250	Comprehensive guide sets
Digital Resource Library	1 system	$3,000	$3,000	Online repository of materials
Community of Practice	1 platform	$2,500	$2,500	Trainer collaboration platform
Evaluation Tools	1 package	$2,000	$2,000	Assessment and feedback systems
TOTAL TRAIN-THE-TRAINER			**$60,850**	Included in Personnel and Materials budget lines